

**WALDO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT SESSION
(SPECIAL SESSION)
NOVEMBER 23, 2010**

PRESENT: Commissioners Amy R. Fowler, Donald P. Berry and William D. Shorey. Also present was County Clerk Barbara L. Arseneau to take minutes.

Call to Order: Commissioner Berry called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

DISCUSSION OF PROGRAMS AT WALDO COUNTY GENERAL HOSPITAL:

Present for this discussion was Waldo County General Hospital Director of Operations Dan Bennett. The Commissioners had invited him in to speak with them about programs that WCGH offers to citizens of the community, after recently hearing of other proposed programs during their previous court session.

D. Bennett said he greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with the Commissioners. There are a lot of activities provided free of charge and community benefit to Waldo County. Traditional ways to report on what they provide for community benefit are in looking at what is provided in charity or free care. Anyone with 200% or below poverty level is eligible for charity care through the hospital. At the end of September 2010, charity care for people in this category totaled \$2.8 million. Bad debts are also tracked for people who don't fall into the charity category but who are unwilling to pay outstanding debt. This, along with Medicare and Medicaid costs exceeding payment totaled \$7.9 million. D. Bennett gave an Annual Report to the Commissioners along with notes for today's presentation.

D. Bennett stated that there are many community programs that provide service and community benefit to county citizens, as follows.

- **CarePartners Program:** Offers coverage for people who do not have access to any other health insurance, who are 200% below property level and don't qualify for any other health insurance benefit. This is underwritten by WCGH and provides health care coverage for these people. This program started in December of 2009. Typically this group of people won't seek preventative care and only seek care when it is emergent in nature, requiring ER visits and ambulance transports. This program offers diagnostic, preventive and hospital care for these people. Currently 93 people in Waldo County are enrolled in this program which is capped at 100. D. Bennett noted that they are looking to expand that cap. This program originated in the Waterville area in Maine General and spread throughout Maine Health, a network. He listed the hospitals that participate including Maine Medical Center, Maine General and Lincoln County Healthcare (Miles and St. Andrews.) Eligible patients can receive care through that network with a minimal co-pay. This prevents, in many cases, health issues reaching an emergency level. There is a care management program and a registered nurse follows through with the cases.
- **Medical Access program:** D. Bennett described this as the "Sister" program to CarePartners. Patients can be enrolled in pharmaceutical company Prescription Assistance Programs, as well as in other public assistance programs. Patients are not enrolled based on income, but must need the pharmaceutical company's guidelines for enrollment. Currently, 293 people are assisted in Waldo County.
- **Journey to Health:** D. Bennett said he believes some County employees have participated in this. B. Arseneau confirmed that several employees had, in fact, enrolled in one of the classes being offered. Free classes are offered for participants designed to encourage community members to live healthy lifestyles. This program highlights exercise, nutrition, and stress reduction. He reported that the

response has been “amazing” and interaction back and forth between community and staff has been great. In the second phase, cooking classes, exercise classes, and group walking have been added. Nearly 400 community members have participated so far. When asked how people become aware of this, D. Bennett said that WCGH tries to send out notices and some local business have been very active in getting the information out there. He informed the Commissioners that Channel 5 covered a hula-hoop session on the news. The Belfast area cable channel also features a number of these programs. This reaches out to the Belfast and Rockland areas, as well. He said he would try to get a schedule out there.

- Another program through Healthy Waldo County is the **5-2-1-0 Program**, which was created by Tori Rogers, who did some of her rotations here in Belfast. She designed this program to help fight obesity. Originally it was designed for youth, but has been expanded to include adults. The program promotes 5 fruits & vegetables, 2 hours of VDT time, 1 hour or more of physical activity, and 0 sugary drinks every day. WCGH has taken out all the soda and candy out of the vending machines. “We’re trying to walk the walk,” D. Bennett explained. “We understand people will make their own personal choices, but we don’t want to offer or profit from selling sugary foods/drinks.” He noted that the program has partnered with area schools, childcare providers, etc. There has also been coordination with Healthy Waldo County. He explained that don’t promise that there is only one way to accomplish those goals of 5-2-1-0, but try to expand the program and in general encourage the goals to be accomplished in a number of ways.

- **Many other Community Activities:** D. Bennett listed the Annual Health Fair, “The Beat Goes On!” for heart-health, Educational classes and other support groups are also available to citizens.

- **Health Centers:** WCGH operates five health care facilities. These are subsidized by the overall operations of WCGH, which is not a money-making operation. The idea is to provide care close to home for people in surrounding communities. The hope is through collaboration, not competition, these programs can be sustained overtime. WCGH has been trying, through membership with Maine Health and also in membership with other health care providers – Pen Bay, St. Andrews, etc. – try to work collaboratively. Occupational health is a goal. He expressed that there really is not enough business activity to sustain a single program in Belfast and a single program in Rockland. WCGH is trying to save money, work collaboratively and have a coordinated collaborative system. This is why WCGH signed a collaborative agreement with Penobscot Community to try and keep similar goals in health care and to be a partner rather than a competitor. He noted that WCGH has also been successful at recruiting good medical staff. Now there are a number of primary care physicians to care for the people of Waldo County. He acknowledged that many citizens still cannot afford medical care, but WCGH is trying to assist these people. D. Bennett concluded by stating that he is very proud of the accomplishments and welcomed any questions from the Commissioners.

W. Shorey commended D. Bennett and informed him of the Waldo County Garden project, noting that the County Garden produced 12,000 lbs of fresh vegetables this year. This has created a positive learning program for the residents at the Corrections Facility and been a help to the community. W. Shorey explained that they were short one shift even with assistance of Re-entry Center. His goal is to try and develop a shift for people in the community to come “pull a few weeds” and get some exercise. “They can socialize, get exercise and work to help the community,” he explained. The County has leased five acres to use, but only used about one acre this year. W. Shorey estimated that the garden could produce 50 to 80,000 lbs. of produce if the County could get enough participation. He wasn’t just thinking of hospital people to participate, but also other folks. “We have the land and should make use of it,” he said.

D. Berry stated that from the perspective of Healthy Waldo County, which he participates in as Commissioner, he believed that this could be put together in a partnership with people in the community who would like to get out and help in the garden. It was noted that there would need to be an educational component to teach the difference between the produce and the weeds.

W. Shorey said there would be meetings in early spring, noting that Randy Doak serves as a consultant. D. Bennett agreed that this would be workable.

D. Berry noted that this would still be a Re-entry project, not a community garden, but assistance from others in the community would be very helpful. He explained that the viewpoint of those in the Re-entry Center who participated was predominantly very positive. Many of them were very happy to be doing something productive outdoors.

D. Bennett thought this might be able to be tied in with the 5-2-1-0 program, possibly involving Teams, or even people from Journey to Health. He agreed that this could be approached from a number of angles, with the various programs reaching out to people. It would have to be understood that Re-entry residents would be working out there the same time as others in the community, but this can be done properly. He added that he had heard many good things about the Waldo County Garden program and had actually driven out and seen it and that he was sure it was helping keep taxes down, as well.

D. Berry said that another program the County utilizes is the NACo Prescription Discount Drug Card. A check comes back with discounts to the County and it has helped the citizens who cannot afford health insurance that covers prescriptions.

A. Fowler said she knew that WCGH had endorsed Penobscot Community Health Care and inquired about how it was affiliated.

D. Bennett explained that PCHC is a large multi-position health center which has applied to get funds from the government that makes it possible to provide care for people whether they have insurance or not. Some services they provide are dental care and some mental health care. Now the Federal Government has announced an opportunity to expand, so PCHC is now looking to purchase the Seaport Family Practice. If the application is accepted by the government, PCHC could be able to offer these extra services, including physical therapy services. He noted that it might be somewhat redundant, as there are already enough providers in the community now. He expressed that there is some need for dental care, as it is difficult for people to find that in the area, although he believed some dentists might say otherwise. There could be licensed social workers, but these services are also already provided. If they look to collaborate and don't look to duplicate services, he believed it should work out. He noted that if the Federal funds are ever lost, then PCHC would have to look at ways to make money, which might include offering x-ray services, etc. This would then become a problem for WCGH. WCGH must provide these services to be a hospital. He felt that the Belfast area is not large enough to have that kind of duplication. He believed the best approach is to put all issues on the table and to collaborate rather than compete.

D. Berry wondered if a survey was done, whether or not it would show that Winterport residents likely go to Bangor for treatment, and that Palermo residents might go to Waterville or Augusta. He wondered how much demand WCGH continually has. A. Fowler agreed, stating that this is why she had asked the questions, so her understanding is that as long as lab or x-ray services were not offered, perhaps collaboration between WCGH and PCHC would work out.

The Commissioners thanked D. Bennett for coming in and meeting with them.

NEW HIRE:

Present to recommend a new hire with the County Commissioners was Deloris Page, Register of Deeds. D. Page announced that after reviewing all the applications and narrowing it down to about five, with two who rescinded applications, the interviews went well even though location had to change at the last minute. (There was a threat reported at the Probate Court and it had been recommended to limit as many people in and out of the building as possible.) D. Page reported that all the interviewers were unanimous that the position should be offered to Julie Howard of Searsport. Ms. Howard will start December 13, 2010 at the starting wage of \$12.98 per hour. D. Page will send a letter confirming this.

****W. Shorey moved, A. Fowler seconded to approve the hire of Julie Howard for the vacant Deeds Clerk position effective December 13, 2010 at \$12.98 per hour. Unanimous.**

The Commissioners noted that there had been a large number of applicants for the Deeds position and mentioned that it would be good to use the remaining applications for the vacant Probate Clerk position.

TRANSFER OF DEEDS EMPLOYEE TO THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE:

The Commissioners posed to D. Page the possibility of Deeds Clerk Dayne Beckett, who will be transferring to the District Attorney's Office full-time in January, spending some time in the District Attorney's Office in December so that she could get some training before starting full-time. D. Page said that one of her people would be on vacation but agreed that half days during the week of December 20th would work.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to enter Executive Session according to M.R.S.R. Title 1 §405 6 (A) for an Unemployment Appeal at 9:47 a.m. Unanimous.**

****W. Shorey moved, A. Fowler seconded to come out of Executive Session at 10:00 a.m. Unanimous.**

No action was taken.

FUNDING RESERVES:

Present was Dave Parkman. The Surplus is \$1,216,762.19. Giving back \$300,000.00 to the Towns. There was brief discussion of what the actual amount was. K. Trussell said that it had been referred to as \$300,000.00 in the minutes but, in actuality, the legal requirement total was \$276,451.79. There is \$500,000.00 of the \$900,000.00 left which leaves \$415,000.00. That is just about 9%. "So we've gone from 20% to 9%," D. Parkman reported. He said he knew how hard it was to get to 20%, as it had taken from 2003 to this year to get to that point. He reported the undesignated fund balances in previous years as follows:

- In 2001 there was an unappropriated balance of \$248,207.00.
- In 2002, the unappropriated balance was \$129,966.00.
- In 2003, the unappropriated balance was \$474,903.00.
- In 2004, it dropped to \$445,322.00.
- In 2005, the balance was \$569,422.87
- In 2006 it was \$657,897.99.
- In 2007 it was \$678,971.65.
- In 2008 it dropped a little to \$641,156.25.

- For 2009 it climbed, because of the Jail consolidation, to \$1,216,762.19.

D. Parkman made some suggestions for funding some of the reserve accounts, including Severance, Technology and Unemployment in particular, as that account might experience a “shortfall.” W. Shorey acknowledged that he preferred to “sit at the \$600,000.00 range” and that the County may be “a little thin, but added that constructing a building was going to be a major accomplishment and he believed that within the next year, the Congress Street land could be sold and reserves could be brought back to where they belonged.

There was additional brief discussion on the reserve accounts being funded and the Commissioners stated that they understood that the Treasurer was trying to protect the finances. W. Shorey assured D. Parkman that the Commissioners would not want this to go on for long and recognized that those reserves would need to be built back up, along with undesignated funds. He believed everyone at the table shared the Treasurer’s thoughts on this.

D. Parkman said that the law stipulates the minimum amount of undesignated funds that must be sent back to the taxpayers. It was noted that \$276,451.79 is the actual amount the County is obligated to send back to the Towns, not \$300,000.00.

CORRESPONDENCE:

1. Janitorial Contract: The Commissioners reviewed the contract drafted by Facilities Manager Keith Nealley between Maureen Hall and the County of Waldo for 2011. Commissioner Berry signed on behalf of the Board of Commissioners.

2. A tax abatement petition has been received from Maria and Richard Lucco of 50 Willow Brook Road, Connecticut for property they own in the Town of Palermo, Maine. The request stated that the Town of Palermo had, on September 15, 2010, denied the petitioners’ request for property tax abatement filed July 14, 2010. This petition to the Commissioners had been received within the 60-day timeframe.

3. MCCA Director Robert Howe sent written notice from PMP, IT Project Manager Eric Stout that the Bulk Data Stakeholders Group, which convened in June at the request of the State and Local Government (SLG) Committee, has now been disbanded. Because of a lawsuit filed against a number of the counties, the counties were advised by their counsel not to participate in the Group because the litigant was also specifically invited. Upon the advice of the SLG Chairs, the group was initially suspended in July until the court case was settled. However, the court case has not yet been settled; so on further advice from the SLG Chairs, the Bulk Data Stakeholder Group is being abandoned. All members were notified November 4, 2010.

4. Probate Clerk Tracy Rackliffe submitted her resignation on November 9, 2010, with her final day of employment being November 26, 2010.

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to accept with regret the resignation of Probate Clerk Tracy Rackliffe, effective November 26, 2010. Unanimous.**

5. Sheriff Scott Story sent written recommendation to promote Corrections Officer Matthew Hall to the rank of Corporal effective November 14, 2010 with a pay increase from \$16.60 to \$18.01 per hour. As indicated in the prior letter dated November 8, 2010, Corporal Hall will also reach the eight-year step with a pay increase to \$18.51 per hour effective December 1, 2010.

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to promote Corrections Officer Matthew Hall to the rank of Corporal effective November 14, 2010 with a pay increase from \$16.60 to \$18.01 per hour, also**

noting that the pay would increase to \$18.51 per hour with the eight-year step effective December 1, 2010. Unanimous.

6. The Commissioners noted pay step increases for the following employees:

- Deeds Clerk Amy Keller reached the five-year step on November 21, 2010 with a pay increase to \$14.73 per hour.
- Corporal/Transportation Supervisor Joshua Bowles will reach the five-year step with a pay increase from \$17.38 to \$18.01 per hour effective November 30, 2010.

7. The Commissioners received an invitation to attend the Cumberland and Lincoln County 250th Anniversary Celebration scheduled on November 30, 2010 at the Rotunda in the Cumberland County Courthouse, Portland at 12:00 noon. None of the Commissioners could attend.

DISCUSSION OF HEALTH INSURANCE RE-ENROLLMENT PROCESS:

Do not need to vote to enroll. S. Gerlach has already delivered message that the County intends to re-enroll with Meritain. Proper documents will be sent by Meritain by December 1st for S. Gerlach to review and advise Commissioners. Then proper documents will be disseminated to employees.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to enter Executive Session at 11:00 a.m. according to MRSR Title 1 405 6 (E) for consultation regarding legal rights and duties of the body. Unanimous.**

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to come out of Executive Session at 11:23 a.m.**

Unanimous.

No action was taken

TRANSFER TO DEEDS OFFICE:

D. Berry recommended that technology work and a new desk for the D.A.'s Office be funded from the Courthouses reserve.

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to fund a desk and technology work to set up a work station for the new position in the District Attorney's Office. Unanimous.**

MISCELLANEOUS COMMISSIONERS BUSINESS:

Tabled Discussion: Corrections Request. The Commissioners tabled the discussion until the next regular court session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Commissioner Berry requested an Executive Session to discuss labor contracts and proposals according to M.R.S.A. Title 1 § 405 6(D).

****W. Shorey moved, A. Fowler seconded to enter Executive Session at 11:32 a.m. according to M.R.S.A. Title 1 § 405 6(D). Unanimous.**

****A. Fowler moved, W. Shorey seconded to come out of Executive Session at 12:15 p.m.**

No action was taken.

****W. Shorey moved, A. Fowler seconded to adjourn the court session at 12:15 p.m. Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted by *Barbara L. Arseneau*
Waldo County Clerk